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Sustainable development: follow-up and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which is submitted in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 62/191, presents recommendations on ways to strengthen the capacity of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat to fulfil its mandate and to strengthen, in particular, the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme and the Small Island Developing States Network.

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I. Introduction

1. It will be recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/191, reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to strengthen the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, as called for in its previous resolutions 57/262, 58/213 A, 59/229, 59/311, 60/194 and 61/196, and urged the Secretary-General to ensure that the Unit is sufficiently and sustainably staffed without delay to undertake its broad range of mandated functions with a view to facilitating the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, from within existing resources, including by redeploying resources.

2. The General Assembly also requested that a report be prepared during its sixty-second session on actions taken to implement the mandate of the Unit.

3. The present report provides an overview of the range of mandated functions of the Unit and gives an account of measures taken to strengthen its staff complement.

II. Background

4. The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was adopted in Barbados in 1994. The Programme underscores the vulnerabilities and development challenges faced by small island developing States, and describes a comprehensive, multisectoral strategy to advance sustainable development in those countries, with emphasis on institutional strengthening and capacity-building to improve their efforts in: promoting economic diversification; managing marine and land resources while preserving unique island biodiversity; improving risk management; promoting industrial innovation and renewable energy exploitation; and supporting a broad social agenda, including health, education and cultural development.

5. To assist the small island developing States in the implementation of that agenda, the international community deemed it essential that a "clearly identifiable, qualified and competent entity" be established within the Secretariat to provide secretariat support for both intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination mechanisms. In 1995, the Small Island Developing States Unit was established by General Assembly resolution 49/122 to fulfil that mandate.

6. In 1997, the General Assembly, in its resolution 51/183, recognizing the importance of information exchange on capacity development among small island developing States in advancing the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, established, within the Small Island Developing States Unit, the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDSTAP) and the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNet). Through both SIDSTAP and SIDSNet the Unit sought to promote: wider understanding and international recognition of the challenges faced by the small island developing States; opportunities for regular contact among those countries; strengthened interregional exchange; capacity-building at the national level by educating stakeholders and mobilizing experts on the problems facing those States; facilitating research and data collection; and sharing information on key development issues. Both programmes, supported from the beginning by extrabudgetary resources that are no

longer available, will require additional financing from extrabudgetary resources if the services once offered are to be restored.

7. The international community reviewed the 10-year progress in implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action at the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 2005. At that meeting the Commission on Sustainable Development was mandated as the primary intergovernmental body responsible for the implementation of and follow-up to the commitments related to small island developing States. At the same meeting, the Secretary-General was requested to fully mobilize and coordinate the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, within their respective mandates, and to further mainstream issues relevant to small island developing States in order to facilitate coordinated implementation of the follow-up to the Programme of Action at the national, regional, subregional and global levels and to ensure that the Small Island Developing States Unit continued to provide substantive support and advisory services and strengthened knowledge management through SIDSNet.

III. Mandated functions of the Small Island Developing States Unit

8. The mandate of the Small Island Developing States Unit, reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its resolution 59/311, established the foundation for the existing functions of the Unit in the following areas:

(a) United Nations system-wide coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and maintaining contact with small island developing States focal points through the inter-agency consultative group on small island developing States, informally established and coordinated by the Unit;

(b) Comprehensive monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, both to the General Assembly and within the framework of the biennial cycle of reporting in the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(c) Delivery of advisory and information services for decision-making by small island developing States and support for networking among stakeholders through SIDSnet, which serves as a critical tool in support of the work of the Unit.

9. On the basis of the above functions, the Small Island Developing States Unit performs normative functions, including: the preparation of annual reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and on the thematic clusters of issues considered by the Commission on Sustainable Development; organization of the review of the Commission of the Mauritius Strategy on Small Island Developing States Day; preparation of articles and studies for publication on issues of importance to key small island developing States; extensive research, building on the in-house database on small island developing States; participation in relevant meetings and ongoing consultations with the small island developing States and the donor community.

10. The Unit's technical and advisory functions, which include management and maintenance of SIDSNet, provision, on request, of technical advice and information

to small island developing States Members of the United Nations and technical support in project implementation, have been largely curtailed because of insufficient resources.

11. The Unit's coordination functions include: convening regular consultations among members of the inter-agency consultative group, including the relevant regional commissions and secretariats of regional intergovernmental organizations directly involved in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy at both the national and regional levels; harmonization of the regional operational plans to ensure comprehensive oversight of priority programmes; organization of and participation in relevant meetings to enhance coordination of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy; and consultation within the Secretariat to advance mainstreaming of and promote synergies on issues of relevance to small island developing States in the programmes of the United Nations.

IV. Measures to strengthen the Unit

12. At its inception, the Small Island Developing States Unit consisted of two established posts: the Chief of Unit (P-5) and a Sustainable Development Officer (P-4). The Secretariat has taken measures to strengthen the Unit through deployment of additional established posts: (a) an Associate Sustainable Development Officer (P-2), (b) a Website Assistant (G-6), and (c) a General Service staff member (G-4). In addition, a Sustainable Development Officer (P-4) position has been requested in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (see A/62/708). In addition, extrabudgetary resources have been secured with the support of the Government of Greece to provide for an Interregional Adviser (L-4) for a period of one year. An Associate Expert will be assigned to the Unit for two years, with the support of the Government of Italy, later in 2008. The Unit will also continue to benefit from its interaction with the Division for Sustainable Development.

13. Consultations are ongoing with donor Governments to secure extrabudgetary resources to support the revitalization of SIDSNet and the restoration, for two years, of the technical posts lost in 2005 for lack of resources, that is, the SIDSNet computer programmer (L-3) and the web communications officer (L-3).

V. Conclusion and recommendations

14. **Recognition of the challenges facing the small island developing States as a "special case" within the context of sustainable development gave impetus to the convening of two international conferences devoted to addressing their development needs. At the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State also recognized the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States and reaffirmed their commitment to the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy (see resolution 60/1), for which the Small Island Developing States Unit has been given substantive responsibility. The General Assembly has also decided in its resolution 62/191, that a review of progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States through the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy would be undertaken during its sixty-fifth session. Responsibility for the organization of this review and its follow-up will rest with the Small Island Developing States Unit.**

15. **In view of the new and emerging challenges facing the small island developing States, there is a need for systematic efforts to scale up the capacity to deliver the mandates of the Unit. Special consideration should be given to expanding the complement of established posts in the Unit beyond the three Professional level posts and two General Service posts presently assigned, in particular by assigning additional established posts for the management of SIDSNet.**